



To: Planning Committee

Date: February 8, 2011

From: Gavin Woo  
Acting Director, Building Approvals

File: 10-6550-01

Re: 2010 Tree Protection Bylaw Program Activity Update

**Staff Recommendation**

That the staff report dated February 8, 2011 entitled "2010 Tree Protection Bylaw Program Activity Update" from the Acting Director of Building Approvals be received for information.

Gavin Woo, P.Eng.  
Acting Director of Building Approvals  
(604-276-4113)

<b>FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY</b>		
<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>		
<b>REVIEWED BY TAG</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>REVIEWED BY CAO</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

## Staff Report

### Origin

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding 2010 Tree Protection Bylaw Program activity and ongoing initiatives being advanced by the Tree Preservation Group in response to consultation with the Development Industry and Residents.

This information provided in this Report supports Council's term goals related to:

- *Ensure effective growth management for the City; and*
- *Demonstrate leadership in and significant advancement of the City's agenda for sustainability through the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy.*

### Findings Of Fact

#### 2010 Tree Protection Bylaw Program Permit Activity and Revenue:

- The number of tree permit applications processed by the Tree Protection Bylaw program has increased 47% over the last four years from 659 applications in 2006, to 971 applications in 2010.
- 3580 replacement trees were required in response to 2780 trees approved for removal in 2010. Overall, 23% more replacement trees were planted than approved for removal. (Note: Rezoning applications typically seek a 2:1 replacement tree ratio as per the Official Community Plan (OCP), where as in single-family tree permit applications, the removal of one tree per year does not require a replacement tree).
- 1,521 trees were retained and/or refused removal last year. This represents a 312% increase from the number of trees retained in 2007.
- The Tree Protection Bylaw program exceeded revenue projections in permit fees for the last two consecutive years.
- For the past 2 fiscal years, 2009-2010, Tree Protection Bylaw enforcement action has resulted in fine revenues totalling \$97,575.
- Capitalizing on the efficiency of issuing fines under the Municipal Ticketing Information (MTI) Bylaw, as apposed to proceeding directly to court, resulted in an 85% savings in allocated legal fee operating expenditures.

#### Tree Protection Bylaw Program Policy Initiatives

- Staff introduced a tree removal application process for development sites that required geotechnical pre-loading. This Council endorsed Tree Removal Permit Application Process (T3 - Rezoning in Process) enables tree removal to occur on development sites

after a successful public hearing provided defined criteria are satisfied. This enhanced tree removal process accounts for Richmond's unique soil conditions while providing the development industry greater control over development timelines, scheduling and carrying costs associated with geotechnical pre-loading requirements.

- Building on the success of the tree removal process (T3 - Rezoning in Process) for development sites that require geotechnical pre-loading, staff brought forward a report, which was endorsed by Council, to expand this streamlined application process to include single-family rezoning sites.
- Tree Bylaw staff developed an Information Bulletin entitled "Landscape Cross-section Drawings at Building Permit Submission" to assist builders when designing on raised-grade development lots.
- Tree Bylaw staff developed an Information Bulletin entitled "Addressing Potential Development conflicts with neighbouring Side Yard Trees" to formalize a process and Arboriculture best practices so as to resolve potential conflicts with neighbouring trees prior to building permit application submission.
- Development and implementation of a Tree Permit Refusal Appeal process for development and non-development tree permit applications.
- Assist the Parks Department in setting up a Tree Permit application process for trees located on City property.

#### Community/ Industry Education

- Presentation on Richmond's Tree Protection Bylaw program to the BCLNA Urban Forestry Council.
- Presentation on Richmond's Tree Protection Bylaw program to high school Teachers as part of the Richmond School District Annual Conference.
- Presentation on Richmond's Tree Protection Bylaw program entitled "A Sustainable Urban Forest", as part of Richmond's Environmental Sustainability Workshop lectures.
- Presentation on Richmond's Tree Protection Bylaw program to the Inter-City Tree Bylaw Committee. This is a regional committee comprised of staff that manage tree bylaws within the lower mainland and Vancouver Island.
- Staff have conducted regular meetings with local small Builders Groups to ensure this important segment of the development industry is able to engage staff on development related tree preservation process issues.

## **Analysis**

The purpose of the Tree Protection Bylaw is to protect Richmond's urban forest by regulating tree removal from private lands and ensuring replacement trees are provided when trees are required to be removed.

The issues related to the administration of tree regulations can be challenging, specifically with regard to the emotional response tree removal and retention elicit and as such, the polar opposite positions people express or bring to the table. One of the main objectives of the program is to create clear and transparent decision-making based on sound Arboriculture industry standards and best practices in fulfilling Council objectives and community expectations.

The basic strategy of the Tree Protection Bylaw program involves preserving healthy trees where possible (based on their long-term viability), permitting the removal of those trees that are either in poor condition or in conflict with new development and requiring the replanting of new trees.

Trees within any urban forest are a dynamic resource - they grow, they mature, they decline and eventually die. Seeking retention where it is feasible, while at the same time ensuring there are adequate replacements, promotes the creation of a sustainable urban forest as a continued benefit to our community.

## **Financial Impact**

None.

## **Conclusion**

This report provides a summary of the Tree Protection Bylaw permit activity and revenue for 2010, an outline of policy initiatives, community/industry education presentations and basic program strategy and objectives. This Report also illustrates how City staff have collaborated with Development Industry representatives to streamline the tree permit application process while also ensuring important City objectives related to sustainability, tree preservation and innovation are being advanced.



Gordon Jaggs  
Tree Preservation Coordinator  
(604-247-4910)

GJ:gj